

SB02-009 SAFE LIFTING BASICS

Our modern lifestyle has many benefits but has also brought more stress to our daily routines. As a result, back problems have become an epidemic in recent times. Next to the common cold, back injuries are the leading cause of lost work to employees. The most common causes of lower back pain are related to conditions that we can do something about.

Posture and poor alignment:

We often hold ourselves in postures that make movement difficult and unnatural, and predispose us to lower back pain. Any posture that compromises the natural curvature and muscular balance of the spine places strain and tension on the supporting muscles and ligaments, weakening them.

Overexertion:

We tend to ignore the subtle signals our backs give us to let up on our activity or change our position. In spite of a twinge here or a little spasm there, we continue to move heavy items around or sit at our workstations extended periods until we strain a muscle or squeeze a disc; then the pain puts us flat on our backs. Automobiles, industrial accidents, improper lifting and active sports are also major causes of overexertion.

Emotional Stress and Muscular Tension:

Stress causes muscles to contract. Chronically contracted muscles stop the circulation of blood and oxygen, resulting in pain and degeneration in the muscle.

The Fort Riley community is not exempt from back injuries. FY00 saw 30 reported work related back injuries. This does not include family members and injuries that went unreported. Training programs and information that focus on the causes and prevention of back injuries due to lifting are available from the DES Safety Division at 239-2514 or on the intranet at <https://intranet.riley.army.mil/des/documents.htm>.